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INTERVIEW WITH: Patrick Shea
INTERVIEWER: Marsha Holland
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TRANSCRIBER: Marsha Holland
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Sony ICRRecorder, digital recorder. Part of the Southern Utah Oral History Project, Monument History segment.

Interview begins informally with this conversation in progress:

MH: So, from the Clinton Administration... You suggested that Al Gore may be a good candidate for an interview for this project?

PS: In my judgement, and I was certainly not at that level, Gore was the person that paid attention to the day-in, day-out details. By the time I came in Leon (Panetta) was the Chief of Staff. Prior to Panetta, Clinton had been notorious for being late and being haphazard.

Clinton had left Oxford when I arrived; he went to Yale and I went to Harvard, so we exchanged friends. He was a remarkable connector. When you talked to him, when I did on a few occasions, it was like you were the only person in the world he was listening to, he has an amazing ability to focus on who is in front of him. So, my own suspicion is that John Lesly came up with the idea as a significant campaign platform for the '96 election. Gore and Secretary Babbitt moved it ahead. When it was presented to Clinton, the genius political instincts took over and the rest is history.

MH: I have found through these interviews that there was some genius going on through the whole endeavor.

PS: I have said, and I have only witnessed it on a few occasions, he can be in a discussion with people and the train, so to speak, was moving down one way and he would pick up on something and literally pirouette 180 degrees and then not follow what had been mapped out. An example with Secretary Babbitt is that there was a vacancy on the Supreme Court and Secretary Babbitt was invited to go to the White House at midnight to have a discussion that lasted until about 1:30 am, and which point Clinton said, "You are going to be my nominee." Secretary Babbitt went home and told his wife he would be the nominee. Evidently, as soon as Babbitt left, Senator Hatch called Clinton and said, "If you nominate Bruce Babbitt to be the Supreme Court Justice you will have the worst confirmation hearing in the history of the United States Senate." Clinton, being Clinton, said who should I nominate? Stephen Brayer. He had been Kennedy's Chief Counsel on the judiciary committee when Kennedy was Chair and Hatch

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was the ranking minority member. Clinton said, "Okay" and did not tell Secretary Babbitt, who found out about it the next morning.

MH: I think there was some of that going on with the Grand Staircase decision, too.

PS: Oh, yes. I think the modern presidency requires that kind of decisiveness and gut political instinct, but is it the way an ethical person would behave is an open question.

MH: Not for some people, but I appreciate that perspective.

PS: Anne Shields was Babbitt's Chief of Staff when I was Director of BLM. Her husband, Mark Shields, is on the PBS news hour. Anne worked at the Justice Department for many years and we had been friends.

Mark and Bruce had been at Notre Dame together, so had been friends that way. One day we were dealing with a problem that had popped up and in exasperation Anne looked at me and said, "You know, the only good friend in Washington is a dead friend." That is the Potomac Village.

MH: It sounds pretty cutthroat and exciting, you have to be on your game. I did read something the other day, regarding Dick Morris, a pollster for Clinton, who mentioned that he had not been in the "Clinton era" game before the '96 re-election bid for Clinton, but his comment was in regard to Clinton, "If you are going to talk to Clinton then you need to be totally prepared, on your game. He is two or three thoughts or ideas ahead of most."

PS: He was also extraordinarily good, as is Hillary Clinton, at mining information. What seems to be a causal conversation, for example, I was at a reception once at the White House shortly after the '96 election. We were going through the receiving line and President Clinton pulled me aside and said, "I want you to know, and please tell Congressman Orton how badly I feel for his loss." Orton was an incumbent, the Grand Staircase caused his lost election. It was that kind of minute detail he was aware of. Another great instance, I was one of the first westerners to support Ron Brown to be DNC Chair in 1988. I was rewarded by being assigned co-chair of Rules Committee. There were a group of five of us that were his sort of inside advisors. He called a meeting in January 1991 when George Herbert Walker Bush was at 90% popularity, just before we went into Kuwait and Ron said, "We are going to win in '92." I said, "Ron, I know some good psychiatrists you might want to see." He asked each of us to pick a candidate, so I picked Senator Tom Harkins from Iowa. Fast forward to February of '92, the first presidential debate, and Clinton is one of the six candidates. I am sitting in the lobby of the hotel where the debate is and he comes up to me and we chat. He said, "I certainly hope I have your support." I said, "Well, Governor, I am hoping you do well, but I am supporting someone else." So, every time I saw him after that many years later, he would ask, "How is Senator Harkins?", really the hallmark of a brilliant politician, they remember who was with them, who was against them.

MH: Let's back up here, let's start off with full name, date of birth and where you were born please.

PS: Patrick A. Shea, February 28th, 1948, Holy Cross Hospital, Salt Lake City, Utah.

MH: And if you would tell me a bit about your educational background, and your path to the place that relates to the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument?

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PS: I was born here, but we moved to Montana when I was seven. We moved back, then I went through public schools. I was first in the family to go to college. I went to the University of Utah one quarter- the summer I graduated from high school. I went to Stanford as an undergraduate, went to Oxford, then went to Harvard Law School. I had always been involved in politics beginning in 1964. It was something that was instinctual. I worked on different political campaigns. I worked for Robert Kennedy in 1968 in California at a grassroots level. When he died, I came back and managed a campaign for Attorney General John Preston Creer.

MH: You are working on Kennedy Campaign in the sixties- so many of you (recent law graduates) were way out there doing hard work; protecting Indian rights, water rights, civil rights, getting presidents elected. Where was that motivation coming from?

PS: Martin Luther King was a huge figure for me, so was John Kennedy. When I was in sixth grade John Kennedy came to Utah and my mother drove me downtown and the Secret Service let me in the Tabernacle to hear him. Then I went over to the Hotel Utah and saw him walk in. He was sort of like a magical figure. Being a non-Mormon and Irish Catholic, there were all sorts of social difficulties. The other day, I used Dragon, the dictation machine, and in order to train it you had to read a bunch of different things, so I read John Kennedy's inaugural address. It is amazing how moving that is even now. There was a call to duty and a fundamental belief that you could change the system. After I did the '68 campaign I went back and was elected to student government at Stanford. I worked for Senator Moss in the Senate as an intern. That job led to a job with Senator Bayh of Indiana. That job got me a job with Senator Mansfield, majority leader. That job got me a job with Congressman Edwards in the House Judiciary Committee. I did an investigation into the shooting at Kansas State and Jackson State and covered the FBI undercover agent. Church became head of the Intelligence Committee and hired me during my last semester of law school. When he became chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee he hired me as counsel. At age thirty I was moving in a different circle. Each time I left Washington I left because I was burned out frankly.

MH: And you are working during these times in the capacity of an attorney?

PS: In the earlier positions it was as an intern doing budget analysis on a military appropriations bill. As counsel for the Foreign Relations Committee I was working as an attorney. That was in 1979 and '80. I was on the Gore Commission investigating the explosion of TWA 800 in August of 1996. Gore chaired that. My brother-in-law was head of AFSCM, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. He had been the first union president to endorse Clinton in '92. He was the person who got me on the Gore Commission. I had known Gore before, but not well. Anne Shields came out to Salt Lake City in '96 and said, "Would you be interested in coming to Washington?" By that point we had two boys. Debbie and I wanted them to have experience, at some point, outside the bubble of Salt Lake. We moved to D.C. and I became the BLM Director.

I headed up the Clinton-Gore campaign in '92 in Utah and then again in '96. I did the political side and it was about August of '96 that someone from the Clinton-Gore campaign headquarters called up and said there was going to be an announcement. They thought I would want to know. It was about two days beforehand. They outlined it. I said, "Let's make sure that Norma Matheson, Governor Scott Matheson's widow, is invited to the announcement because the

Clintons and the Matheson's have known each other since they were governors." They agreed to that. I asked where it was going to be announced. They said on the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. I said, "Really?" I was in Utah. It happened after that, once the election was over and the Gore Commission was winding down in January of '97 that I was approached about being the BLM Director. I came into the National Monument process when the planning for Grand Staircase was going on and trying to figure how that would operate.

MH: So, you came in during the Planning and Implementation?

PS: Yes, after the announcement. I had had a good relationship with Governor Mike Leavitt, we worked together in '88. Secretary Babbitt was very good at understanding the need to make amends after the surprise announcement. We came out here on different occasions and Babbitt was very good at getting Mike Leavitt to make lemonade out of lemons, so to speak.

Babbitt's vision was for BLM to manage the Grand Staircase just as the Grand Teton was first announced as a national monument and then create a sustainable ecosystem around it. His vision was that it would become a mecca for people to visit an area that is left preserved and protected. Otherwise it would have been bastardized into several small McDonald stands.

MH: I do know the early planners said they worked very hard at boundaries that would provide continuity and sustain the ecosystem.

PS: For instance he authorized us to hire a bunch of biologists to go out and do surveys. An entomologist from Utah State discovered that there were over 280 different species of bees on the Grand Staircase. The ecosystem there is so complex and nobody had ever looked at it. As is true for most of these western areas, we just don't pay attention to the things that are turning out to be very very important.

MH: Once the Monument is designated and you are asked to lead BLM, what were some of your main challenges?

PS: I analogize it to when I was head of student government at Stanford, amongst my Mormon relatives, my mother was Mormon, I was a local hero. The first part of that year, early '69, Stanford decided not to renew their athletic contract with BYU, {this was a time when the Mormon Church would not allow blacks to hold the priesthood. So, many colleges including Stanford would not compete with BYU} So, I went from being the golden son to being the goat. When I was announced as BLM Director, many of relatives in Southern and Central Utah were quite upset because I was moving over to the other side.

The highest priority, again this was Bruce Babbitt's vision, was that BLM was often referred to as the Bureau of Livestock and Mining, meaning it was controlled by the industry. He wanted the organization to have a vested interest in the wellbeing of the resources that they were managing. There was a lot of pressure from Parks and from Fish and Wildlife to have Grand Staircase become a national park. The reality, you could not under the Antiquities Act make that declaration, you could designate who was going to manage it. So, Secretary Babbitt designated BLM to manage it. Part of the challenge was to create a management team that was capable of managing not for how much grazing you did on it, or how much oil, gas, and minerals you could exploit from it, but how you could actually preserve the landscape. Some really good people had

that vision, Carolyn (Shelton) is a great example. They sort of rose up out of the ranks saying- I have been determining grazing permits, we have been doing land management plans based on how many oil and gas permits we can do, now I can actually do what I want to do. That team was created to manage Grand Staircase.

I actually lost clients here in Utah after I left government. When I was there and Babbitt was the Secretary the people at BLM who were working on the Grand Staircase knew that they were protected in Washington, that the bureaucratic in-fighting wouldn't eliminate them and their budget, they would be protected. When Bush came in and Secretary Norton became Secretary, and Kathleen Clark from Utah became the director of BLM, that protection disappeared. There was enormous pressure on those people to move on and not fulfill the vision that Bruce Babbitt had started. They were pressuring the Grand Staircase -then Kate Cannon- to get her out. They finally succeeded in getting someone new, Rene Berkhoudt. Joe Bauman from the Deseret News called me up and asked "What do you think of this?" I said, "If you want the village idiot people to lead the parade, then you have the right group of people." I was working for a Philadelphia law firm that did a lot of bond work for counties, I was summoned into the office and told I had to withdraw that statement. I said, "I am not withdrawing it." I left the law firm.

MH: So, the major challenge then as you describe it and Babbitt envisioned then was to change the mission of BLM, besides handing this land over to BLM, but to manage as a protected landscape?

PS: It was the culture.

MH: Wasn't the last time they messed with the culture/mission in the late '70s, with FLPMA, right?

PS: Carolyn can tell you about the retired Marine who was brought in during Kathy Clark's regime, Rene's deputy. I almost moved to Kanab to head up the Friends group of the Grand Staircase. I had to talk to a bunch of people there, which is how I met Carolyn. At least the people I have seen and remained in touch with say there has been a huge culture change at BLM. People who were more attuned to the overall protection of the public lands as opposed to purely exploiting them are retiring or being removed. That is how I got involved with Tim DeChristopher, I knew he was going to get hammered by the Bush people.

MH: Your major work objectives then were what?

PS: To get a management team in place that could fulfill Secretary Babbitt's vision of having a legacy that would last far beyond the Babbitt administration, change of culture, and have people in the local area again value the natural resources that are there and not have this false image of being cowboys.

Babbitt would not let me do anything publically until I was confirmed. There was a BLM State director, Rolly Robinson. You might talk to him, he is still alive. Rolly took me on a three day tour of the Grand Staircase. We were down in Escalante. We got up early and went to this local greasy spoon. There are a bunch of cowboys having their morning coffee, the topic of BLM came up and they are talking about how if they could just do x, y, or z to the Director of the BLM, that is what they would do. Rolly leans over to me and says, "Should I tell them who you are?"

There is another BLM state director, Ed Hastings from California. People like Ed were what made the ability to implement the Grand Staircase possible. Ed Hastings trained people to be land managers. I think of my own metamorphosis, when I was growing up, sage brush was the enemy. You would go hunting and a pheasant or a rabbit would hide behind sage brush and you couldn't shoot. When I went to work for the BLM and began to understand how much of an anchor sage brush is in the high desert ecology then I really began to appreciate it. I think that that is part of what happens when people from Salt Lake, Ogden, or Provo actually have a chance to go down there and see the incredible environment. A contradiction, the LDS Church wants to have a chance for kids to pull hand carts to Hole in the Rock, BLM has a rule that you can have no more 12 people camping out, so their permit application was vetoed. (Since then there is an allowance for these type of groups) There was also the San Juan Hill Project, it has almost gone to the other extreme where you come in to do a project, you must have all the proper forms or nothing happens. Part of the reason Babbitt liked the BLM was he had seen people like Ed Hastings do things and did not have to follow the bureaucratic organ. In a start-up situation, you need that kind of creativity. That is where I give credit to Kate Cannon, she knew what had to be done but she could be charming to some of the folks and put up with an enormous amount of abuse and eventually win them over.

MH: She worked very hard to find a resolution to the RS2477 issue, and came close, but then it was an election year and all those guys she was negotiating successfully with were swept away.

PS: That was Mike Noel. Mike Noel was a BLM employee and he kept leaking confidential information on the appraisals for the in-holdings, leaking it to the press. Part of the deal between Leavitt and Babbitt was that he would give the State of Utah good trades for the School Trust Lands and for some other private in-holdings, and the grazing rights. That is why Hatch was involved six to eight weeks ahead of time. He protected the grazing interest of folks in Kane County and San Juan County and some others, Garfield County.

MH: So, what you are saying is that Hatch was informed ahead of the announcement in order to protect grazing.

PS: Oh, yes. You need to talk to Juan Palma, there is written records of Hatch being at the meetings saying, "This is what we demand." And that is some of the antagonism he had towards Bruce Babbitt because of the Supreme Court stuff. It is still tit for tat. Noel was leaking this information, so word came to me that we needed to get him out of there. He was told he could move to Nome, Alaska or retire. He chose to retire.

MH: He did spend time on the Andalex mine proposal for the BLM, and he felt like he had a lot of support for it because it was high grade, low Sulphur.

PS: He did also have property up Johnson Canyon. I find him to be one of the more despicable people I have had to deal with. I feel he convinced Phil Lyman to do the things he did under false promises and now that the rooster's coming home to roost, Phil is realizing that Mike has misled him.

MH: What about your successes or results as a result of your position as BLM Director during the initial time of the Grand Staircase? What worked?

PS: Two lines of analysis there. Had Al Gore been elected in 2000, the groundwork of Secretary Babbitt and others, including me, had put together would have been to cement in place a sustainable change of culture. We would have been able to take new BLM employees through a significant area of BLM land management where it wasn't exploiting the land, but sustaining ecosystems and educating the public about the treasures of the public land. And with Bush's election, Secretary Norton and Kathleen Clark, we use this as an example...one of the more unpleasant discoveries I made when I became BLM Director was that I was in charge of the Wild Horse Program. It is a perennial problem; they are feral animals, there is no predator for them, their fertility rate is through the roof (25%). We had a plan which essentially said "If we can get the wild horses down to approximately 32,000, that is a sustainable load on the land. They had budgeted 20 million dollars. I authorized research on fertility control, to inoculate the mares and geld the stallions. When I left, we had it down to about 35,000 horses, still within the 20 million dollar budget. When Bush left there were 85,000 horses and the budget had ballooned to 80 million dollars. It is that kind of neglect that ends eight years where people like Kate Cannon had to be very resilient not to succumb to the pressure coming out of Washington to revert back to exploiting the land rather than protect it.

MH: Well, unfortunately it is happening now. Can I ask you this, what is going on in the State right now?

PS: Having supported Obama early and with enormous pressure for not supporting Hillary, the result has been alienating with a group of people from Chicago who have no understanding of the west. Salazar did but he came from a ranching background. When I was representing Tim DeChristopher I had actually talked to Secretary Kempthorne to see if he would exercise his authority as Secretary to strike a deal with Tim where he would do 2000 hours of community service. The Secretary's staff kept leading me on until the Friday before the inauguration and then his deputy called me up and said, "We are not going to do it." I then called David Hayes, who had been Babbitt's deputy, who later became Salazar's deputy, he said they would think about it. But, the reality was that they could not take on the oil and gas industry in the first six months of the new administration. Tim was essentially left hanging out to dry. The White House never considered it a truly important mission and I think that is why Salazar left. He was tired of not being listened to. Jewel, who I knew from REI, who is really good at publicity, as determined by the White House as opposed to what you might do. Secretary Babbitt rationalized the landscape of Arizona by making each of the different ecosystems managed by either the Feds, the State or counties, or the tribes. Same thing happened in Colorado. Governor Matheson tried to do the same thing here in 1976, with Project Bold. What people like Mike Noel have done is create, as a political pivotal point, a litmus test; are you for State control or are you for Federal control? People in the second and even third generation are beginning to see the Federal government as the enemy. People working for BLM...I said this last night in an interview, after the standoff in Nevada, with the rancher down there, Clive Bundy, I was the first BLM Director to sue him for his failure to pay his grazing fees. Then when they rode into Recapture Canyon it was like a huge rallying cry and now the State legislature just authorized 14 million dollars to make an appeal to the Supreme Court of the United States on original jurisdiction about the states have a right to control their land outside the federal government.

MH: And the state appropriates this money that is from taxpayers, who don't really have a clue what legislators are really up to.

PS: The reporter from Washington called me yesterday because they released a legal study by a group out of New Orleans that asked for 14 million dollars to do this lawsuit. They have already spent 20 million and they have not won a single case.

MH: Would you add what you think you were able to accomplish during this time?

PS: Amongst young people looking for employment opportunities in the federal government, that the Bureau of Land Management is now open to people who consider themselves conservationists or environmentalists and that there are several offices where that is really good. There is also a place for range and mining specialists. I think a fundamental thing to me is the change in government. It is not like a light switch, you don't turn it on or off. It is something that gradually takes hold. And that is where leaders like Bruce Babbitt or John Leshy are so important because they create an environment that facilitates people growing up and realizing that those are the ethical ways you can manage government as opposed to what I see with republicans where it is exploit, exploit, exploit. My two sons have sworn they will never have children, but my other relatives who have many grandchildren will be able to ride out on the Grand Staircase and say, "Thank God, somebody protected this incredible land."

MH: Lastly, what is your current assignment?

PS: I am a Research Professor of Biology at the University of Utah and a private lawyer. My wife believes there is no volunteer cause I can't take up. She is an oncology nurse up at Huntsman.

MH: Any last thoughts about the Grand Staircase in general?

PS: I have known Governor Andrus who was Secretary during the Carter Administration, I have known Bruce Babbitt and I hope for my boys they get to work with some leaders like these two leaders and to learn how things can be done as opposed to other alternatives that are far less attractive and far less sustainable.

MH: Yes, who are the ones who are coming up to find compromise and solutions now?

PS: My son did run for State office. Justin Miller got indicted so his seat became open. Michael lost in the first round, but it was truly a strange out of body experience to sit in the audience watching him give his first political speech. He is very good.

MH: Well, I appreciate all your hard work and appreciate your time to do this.

PS: I think it is important to get history put down.

End of interview Time: 0:46:36